

My first experience of a Parliamentary Advocacy Day

It was a great honor to be invited by the NCWA President Barbara Baikie to attend the Annual Parliamentary Advocacy Day organized by Equality Rights Alliance(ERA). ERA is Australia's largest network advocating for women's equality, women's leadership and recognition of women's diversity. It brings together 61 organisations including NCWA with an interest in advancing women's equality (please visit the link for more information: <http://www.equalityrightsalliance.org.au/about-us>).



Photo: meeting with the President Barbara Baikie and NCYWA members Cheneyce and Kate



Photo: Margaret Smith(middle) and Barbara Baikie (Right) from NCWA

On 23 November, more than 30 people from different organisations across Australia gathered in the Parliament House, Canberra to advocate on a number of issues pertinent to ERA members including funding renewal for National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH), Tax Reform and Innovative Financing. As NPAH funding is due to end on 1 July 2017. NPAH urgently needs to be renewed, but importantly about improving NPAH so that there was sustainable, secure and long-term funding. Together we met MPs, Senators, Ministers and advisors to the Parliamentarians, including Senator Skye Kakoschke-Moore, the Hon. Mark Dreyfuss MP, Senator Lee Rhiannon and advisors etc.

I was fortunate to be grouped with Dr Jennifer Strauss AM and Marie Coleman AO, from Graduate Women Victoria and National Foundation for Australian Women respectively, to have a discussion with Nico Louw, Advisor to the Hon. Scott Morrison MP. The issues we raised were NPAH, and its urgency especially for older women, single mothers with children and those women who experienced domestic and family violence, and the need for a review of Negative Gearing and Capital Gains Tax Exemption policies. My suggestion to Nico was that “NPAH funding would be an economic investment and social investment. Because housing relates to general health issue, ageing issue and the issue of violence against women. Imagine the consequence of a single young mum with kids sleeping in the car cannot give kids proper living condition and education. Besides, it costs governments more to keep a person homeless than it costs to provide permanent housing to end homelessness. More recent research from Parsell shows that over a 12-month period, people who were chronically homeless used state government funded service that cost approximately A\$48,216 each, and over another 12-month period in which they were tenants of permanent supportive housing, the same people used services that cost approximately A\$35,117.” Jennifer and Marie spoke strongly about the issue of housing affordability for older women and for those suffering domestic and family violence. There is a need to reform Negative gearing as 50% of benefits went to people in top 10% of income brackets.



Photo: Dr Jennifer Strauss AM (Middle) and Marie Coleman AO(Right)

The other groups presented the issues to different political parties. However, our goals are the same: we require long-term, sustainable, and secure funding to meet diverse meet of women; reform of Negative Gearing and Capital Gains Tax Exemption; an overarching National Affordable Housing Strategy that is responsive to the diverse needs of women. It may seem that the power and strength of 30 women are limited, I am optimistic that our advocacy believe we will lead to positive change.